

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SEC-01 JUSE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CU-02 SS-15 NSC-05 L-03 H-02

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P R 102329Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1704

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

ZIEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 2593

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: VESCO SPEAKS TO STUDENT JOURNALISTS

REF: SAN JOSE 4240

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN PRESS CONFERENCE FOR COSTA RICAN UNIVERSITY JOURNALISM STUDENTS AT HIS HOME, ROBERT VESCO TALKED ABOUT HIS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS; HIS SUCCESS IN FINANCIAL WORLD; HIS ACTIVITIES IN COSTA RICA; USG "PERSECUTION" OVER WATERGATE; AND HOW SEC, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, AND AMBASSADOR TODMAN ARE OUT TO GET HIM. EMBASSY RESPONDED TO PRESS QUESTIONS ON SOME OF VESCO'S MOST FLAGRANT DISTORTIONS-- AND OMISSIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. ROBERT VESCO WAS INTERVIEWED BY A DOZEN UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICAN JOURNALISM STUDENTS ON OCTOBER 7. INTERVIEW REPORTED IN DETAIL ONLY IN EVENING LA PRENSE LIBRE OCTOBER 8 AND EXCELSIOR OCTOBER 9. MEETING WITH STUDENTS
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HELD AT VESCO HOME IN SAN JOSE; A SECRETARY AND A

TRANSLATOR (BOTH VESCO EMPLOYEES) WERE ON HAND TO ASSIST.
THIS INTERVIEW SEEMS TO BE WHAT VESCO REFERRED TO IN
RECENT PAID ADS PROMISING TO SPEAK TO CHARGES MADE
AGAINST HIM DURING ASSEMBLY DEBATE LAST WEEK.

3. IN GENERAL, VESCO REITERATED PREVIOUS PUBLIC PRO-
NOUNCEMENTS ON HIS BACKGROUND, HIS ACTIVITIES IN COSTA RICA,
CHARGES OF USG "PERSECUTION" BECAUSE OF WATERGATE AND HIS
FRIENDSHIP WITH FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON, AND PERSONAL
ATTACKS ON AMBASSADOR. CONSEQUENTLY, THERE WAS NO
SPECIFIC MENTION OF ANY OF THE OUTSTANDING INDICTMENTS
AGAINST VESCO IN THE U.S.

HIGHLIGHTS:

(A) VESCO IS QUOTED: "I WILL BE A COSTA RICAN AS SOON AS I CAN...
I NO LONGER FEEL LIKE AN AMERICAN. I ABANDONED THE U.S.
IN 1971..." HE NOTED HE HAS BEEN LIVING IN COSTA RICA
FOR THREE YEARS, THAT NOT ONLY IS HE INVESTING MONEY
BUT ALSO HE IS REARING HIS FAMILY HERE, AND THAT HIS WIFE
WILL SOON GIVE BIRTH TO THEIR FIFTH CHILD IN COSTA RICA.

(B) IN RESPONSE TO A STUDENT JOURNALIST'S QUESTION
ON HOW VESCO EXPLAINS THE "PERSECUTION OF THE USG" AGAINST
HIM, VESCO CITED HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON
AND WATERGATE. VESCO NOTED (IN EXCELSIOR STORY) THAT HE
REPRESENTS A "FIRST PRIZE" FOR THE U.S. PUBLIC OFFICIAL
WHO OBTAINS HIS RETURN TO THE U.S., AND IN THIS REGARD
MENTIONED THE SEC. JUDGE CHARLES E. STEWART OF THE COURT
OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, AND AMBASSADOR
TODMAN. VESCO CHARGED THAT AMBASSADOR TODMAN IS
PURSUING HIM, AND THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S MISSION IS
SPECIAL (SIC) "BECAUSE HE IS THE ONLY U.S. AMBASSADOR
NAMED WHO DID NOT APPEAR BEFORE THE SENATE." IN RESPONSE
TO A FOLLOW-UP QUESTION, VESCO DENIED THAT AMBASSADOR
TODMAN'S APPOINTMENT WAS "MADE ON THE MARGIN OF THE LAW,"
EXPLAINING (IN EXCELSIOR VERSION) THAT ALTHOUGH IT WAS
ALL LEGAL, AMBASSADOR TODMAN WAS NAMED "WITHOUT
NOTIFICATION, WITHOUT PUBLICITY, AND WITH A WAIVING OF
PROCEDURES--A UNIQUE CASE IN THE HISTORY OF THE U.S."
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VESCO CONTRASTED THIS TO THE STANTON ANDERSON HEARINGS.

(C) VESCO CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT HE HAS OR HAS
HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH EXCELSIOR (CURIOSLY EXCELSIOR
DID NOT REPORT THAT STATEMENT), AND STATED THAT HE DOES
NOT INVEST IN THE MEDIA. HE ALSO DENIED THAT HE CONTRIBUTED
TO LOCAL POLITICAL PARTIES.

4. IN RESPONSE TO LA PRENSA LIBRE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER REQUESTS FOR COMMENTS ON THESE STORIES, EMBASSY HAS ONCE AGAIN SPELLED OUT THE EXISTING CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST VESCO IN THE U.S., AND REITERATED PREVIOUS STATEMENTS BY AMBASSADOR TODMAN THAT USG THROUGH EMBASSY UTILIZES STRICTLY LEGAL CHANNELS FOR DEALING WITH EXTRADITION MATTERS. EMBASSY EXPLAINED PRACTICE OF SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE TO DISPENSE WITH HEARINGS FOR MANY SECOND OR THIRD TOUR AMBASSADORS, POINTING OUT THAT AMBASSADOR TODMAN LIKE ALL U.S. AMBASSADORS WAS CONFIRMED BY SENATE. ON SUBJECT OF COMMUNICATION WITH GOCR ON EXISTING COSTA RICAN LEGISLATION AND CHARGES OF U.S. "INTROMISSION," EMBASSY CALLED ATTENTION TO STATEMENTS OF PRESIDENT ODUBER, VICE PRESIDENT CASTILLO, AND FOREIGN MINISTER FACIO DENYING SUCH CHARGES. EMBASSY ALSO NOTED, AS ABOVE CITED COSTA RICAN FIGURES ALREADY HAVE, THAT SUBJECT OF EXTRADITION HAS BEEN UNDER DISCUSSION FOR SOME TIME WITH GOCR, BUT THAT EMBASSY WOULD HAVE NO COMMENT ON SUBSTANCE THEREOF OR OF CONFIRMATION OF ANY SPECIFIC EXCHANGES. SOME OF THESE POINTS ALSO CONTAINED IN PAO LETTER TO EDITOR OF EXCELSIOR.

5. COMMENT: THE "PERSECUTED" IMAGE VESCO HAS LONG BEEN DEVELOPING ON BALANCE WAS PROBABLY STRENGTHENED AS A RESULT OF HIS ORCHESTRATED SESSION WITH THE STUDENT JOURNALISTS. NEWS OF THE VESCOS' UPCOMING BLESSED EVENT WILL HELP THIS IMAGE SIGNIFICANTLY IN THIS FAMILY-ORIENTED SOCIETY. HOPEFULLY, HOWEVER, LA PRENSA LIBRE WILL PROVIDE SOME BALANCE WITH EMBASSY'S REJOINERS IN ITS OCTOBER 11 EDITION. LANE

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